

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name:** Senator Robert Dole

**Date of Interview:** October 5, 2012

**Location of Interview:** Washington D.C.

**Interviewer:** Mike Bayliss

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Senator Dole discusses how he became involved with the building of the World War II Memorial, being finance chairmen and the numbers of different ways funds were raised for the Memorial, the dedication ceremony, and what the most meaningful part of the Memorial is to him.

Mike: My name is Ranger Mike Bayliss of the National Park Service, this is October 5, 2012 and I have the honor of interviewing Senator Robert Dole, who did such amazing work for the World War II Memorial. It's an honor to have you here, sir.

Senator: Thank you (unintelligible).

Mike: Well sir, how did you get involved with the project to create the World War II Memorial?

Senator: Well, it was sort of an indirect invitation to participate; I'd been at the White House where President Clinton had given me the Medal of Freedom. And we were visiting afterwards and the American Legion and the VFW guys were there and they said, "Let us show you this little mock-up of the World War II Memorial, which we hope to get built." And they had a replica of it in the White House, so I looked it over. And they said, "Wouldn't you like to be the finance chairman?" I said, "No." I mean it's hard to raise that much money, but the more I thought about it and I talked to other people, I decided well, it was probably my duty to my fellow colleagues in World War II to try to help. So I said yes a couple of weeks later, (unintelligible) have to worry about taxes.

Mike: Well, my father was a World War II Veteran, Theodore Bayliss, class of '42 Naval Academy, and he was so grateful for the work that you did and he contributed. My

mother was a Red Cross volunteer at (Name) Island Naval Hospital during the war so, you know, thank you for.

Senator: Well, my wife, of course, who was president of Red Cross for eight years, she's been going with me, I don't know the last several months. And generally the groups are on Saturday, but sometimes there'd be a group on a Tuesday or a Wednesday that we're able to meet. I don't know how many groups I've met, (unintelligible) tells me he's keeping track and it's a hundred and some. It's a lot but, you know, I don't have to do it so it's an experience that I think it gives me a lot of inspiration and what a great country we live in.

Mike: Yes, sir. As finance chairman for the World War II Memorial, what were your greatest challenges and how did you overcome them?

Senator: Getting money was the greatest challenge but it's like every time we thought we were getting close to what we needed, the cost would go up, the cost of building the memorial, and finally it ended up to be over 170 million. And my thought was if we can't raise it, we're not going to build it; we're not going to go up and ask the government. We want this to be a veteran's memorial, not a government memorial. And the government did give us \$10 million for start-up costs, which we appreciated. So I think the biggest challenge, of course, was getting organized and I needed somebody on the corporate side who was still active in business who could call somebody that had called him for money. And Fred Smith of FedEx is a wonderful guy; I remember going to meet with him about being the co-chair and I walked in the hotel room, he was here overnight on business. And I started making my little spiel, I had some notes, and he said, "Do you really want me to do this?" I said, "I sure do." He said, "Okay." And that was it and he was a great help, because he could call whoever that used to call him, and he could open doors in a few times where I couldn't; I couldn't get in the place.

Mike: So raising the money for the World War II Memorial was a team effort?

Senator: Oh, we had lots of help and of course we had the veteran's groups contributed a lot; American Legion about 8 million, VFW about the same. Wal-Mart was the biggest contributor with about 18 million, and they turned us down the first time but we went back the second time with more evidence and more things we could tell them about the benefit to them of the Memorial and what it meant in Arkansas and people they do business with.

Mike: What were the different steps in developing the Memorial, the different stages of development?

Senator: Right, you know we weren't involved in that, we were involved in the money so they could spend it on the next step. And we had a few times when we thought the well was going to run dry, money was hard to get and they had to move on with the construction. And then we got a notice, instead of 70 million they needed a 100 million or somewhere in that ballpark and that was a blow because it's hard to raise \$100 million. But with a lot of help (now underscore that, I don't want to leave the impression that I did it) but I had a lot of help. I made a lot of phone calls, Fred Smith made a lot of phone calls, we had a professional fundraiser and then we had scores of volunteers we had in the schools, the kids would raise money, pennies and dimes and quarters. And they'd bring their grandpa down for the donation, when they made the donation, so it was, overall it was a great experience. There were some days that were pretty frustrating; I remember in particular one corporate entity who could afford to have given us millions. We called and had a very nice visit and he said, "Well, Bob, I really appreciate you're calling but it just doesn't fit our guidelines." And I said, "Well, World War II didn't fit my guidelines, but you know a lot of us went." We couldn't, we couldn't shake him. They didn't give to bricks and mortar, so that was their policy and there are no exceptions. He wished us well and I'm not going to say what we wished him after we hung up.

Mike: What seemed to be the key thing that convinced people to give money to the World War II Memorial or key reasons? Did anybody ever say anything memorable along those lines to you?

Senator: Well, I think in the corporate world it was the fact that many of their employees had been World War II veterans, and there were still some working in the company, and it was sort of a tribute to their work force. Individuals that had a son or a daughter, in-laws or somebody in the service, maybe somebody was wounded severely or somebody who lost their life. And then there's this general good feeling about veterans and particularly so of those who were wounded in combat. So it wasn't any, it didn't take much of a sales pitch, just give them the facts and tell them how much money we needed. I'm just trying to think if there are any surprises, I'm certain there were, you know, money we didn't expect we'd get. And we had it pretty well organized; we'd have somebody call ahead to set up a phone call with a CEO so we wouldn't keep calling and missing each other. So when we called at 1:30 on a Tuesday, he knew what was coming and he'd been prepared about what it was for and nearly every case they were responsive. And so were the individuals and so were, I think of Hank Greenburg (unintelligible), he's about the only World War II vet who was still a CEO and still around. And I remember talking to him and he said, "Well, would \$500,000 be enough?" I said, "Yes sir, that's a lot of money." But he, you know, he was happy to do it and would have given us more if we needed it. So, the people generally, some couldn't afford to give it, so we didn't fuss at people who couldn't afford it. But, there were a few who docked and dodged and we could never tie them down.

Mike: Did you discuss the memorial with the architect, Friedrich St. Florian in any discussions about the...?

Senator: No, I met him and visited with him a few minutes but I didn't understand anything about what he was doing, and we kind of watched it go up. But, as far as having any discussion on the architectural, what it was going to look like; I think he would have told us but we never thought it was necessary to waste his time and ours when we had an

assignment and he had an assignment, and I believe he did a great job. Not everybody was happy with some of the quotes on the memorial, on the different places. But again, I would say that was a very, very small number, maybe one-tenth of one percent. So it was really a, the thing that kind of inspires me to go down and greet these people every Saturday or whenever they're here, is the fact that this is a veteran's memorial. I mean the federal government would have given us the money, but we decided that our generation wasn't the "give me" generation. We'd either do it ourselves or just say we can't do and turn it over to somebody else. But as we, and we had a lot of direct mail, you know, everything we could think of to raise money.

Mike: What do you remember most about the dedication ceremony and the veteran's reunion that followed it?

Senator: What I remember most, it holds the record for the largest seated crowd ever. I think there were what, a hundred-thousand people there, and they all had chairs and a lot of them were older and they couldn't have stood there for two hours. And that really, when I got up to speak and looked out (unintelligible) from left to right, it was amazing. And of course, there were a lot of World War II veterans there, and their families and a lot of people who, obviously all the people who donated were invited; the Legion, VFW, disabled veterans, they had, each group had so many people there. But it really was, and the fact of the speakers we had. We had top-notch speakers and the President on down or up, depending on your political views. It was quite a day and there were a lot of tears shed that day by people. Whenever I, I generally try to find somebody in the audience to kind of keep an eye on so I don't stray too far one way or the other. And I picked out a guy in the third row on my left, just a little bit left of the podium and only five rows down and I just kind of kept my eye on him. And he was just so excited that the tears were flowing, it wasn't from sadness it was just, "Thank God we have a memorial, they've recognized our service." And people say, "Why spend all that money on a memorial? Why don't you help veterans in the hospitals?" Well, what about those that served before? Don't forget their sacrifices, and that was high on the list. Obviously, we want to honor veterans whatever conflict they might have been in, but these were World War II

vets and out of a 16 ½ million, when we finished the memorial, we were down to about, I think, 3.2 million. So a great share of the men and women who served shrunk about 70%, but nobody ever really, we could have built a memorial any time if somebody would have mentioned it in Congress. It would have sailed through Congress, along with the money, but for some reason nobody got excited until Congress and Marcy Kaptur had an uncle or a relative or something at a picnic, and he said, “Marcy, why don’t we have a memorial for World War II?” She said, “Well, it’s probably because nobody’s thought of it.” And of course it was easy to pass the bill authorizing it, that made it legal and from then on it was; we met a lot of great people raising the money, too. You know some people have interest in policemen or firemen or veterans, as far as the pecking order, veterans first, I think, and there’s a lot of scam artists out there. Congressman Waxman had a hearing two years ago with one of the scam artists, pegging himself 300,000 a year. He had two homes, his wife was on the payroll and it’s like these ads you hear now on TV, send your car to (unintelligible), take a tax credit, serve those who served us all these years. And there’s a group who keeps track of how much the charity took in and how much they spent, and it would blow you away because the administrative costs were excessive. And it’s too bad that people, you know, when we’re trying to honor a veteran or a fireman or a policeman, can’t keep their hands off the money. But that’s just again a minority, but (unintelligible) quite a bit of the money. I remember in ‘96 when I was running, I guess I was running—didn’t run fast enough—for president, we learned of a couple groups who were “Veterans for Bob Dole. Elect Bob Dole President. He’s a veteran, he needs your help.” We learned the one group had raised about 2 million, but you can’t stop them because of the First Amendment. Anyway, we live in a great country and we should recognize the service men and women have given regardless of the branch. And when we say veteran we don’t mean our generation, it’s also, we’re talking about Korea and Vietnam and the Desert Conflict, General Schwarzkopf, and, of course, World War I where my dad served, and their memorial is what, about two hundred yards from the World War II Memorial. And it’s a beautiful big white dome, but it probably would cost a million dollars maybe to do it, but they have in the last few months cleaned up the area and repainted the dome and it looks much nicer now. And we almost forgot because the weeds were growing up and it was in a state of disrepair.

Mike: And in the wintertime when the leaves are down, you can actually see the World War I Memorial from the World War II Memorial.

Senator: Oh really.

Mike: So that becomes a really nice way to set up the origins of World War II. You can show visitors that memorial in the background and talk about all these terrible things that came out of World War I.

Senator: And you can, there's still grandchildren around from World War I. And there's been talk about building another memorial. I don't think we need another one because the Air Force has one now and they're building another I think up near the Capitol. I think you can overdo the significance of honoring the veterans if you have five or six memorials. It ought to be something special, not "well here's one, and one over there, one over there, one over there." There ought to be one that is *the* memorial, and I think in our case it is. I think people working on the memorial is number one when it comes to honoring World War II veterans.

Mike: I had the great pleasure of inviting my father to one of my talks at the World War II Memorial. So here was dad and he's got 30 people around him, I have him seated and comfortable in the shade. And then I tell all the visitors, "This is my dad. He served in World War II in the Navy; he met Patton in Sicily. My mother was a Red Cross volunteer." And you should have seen the tears in his eyes. So on a personal level, I'm grateful for that, the chance to, and that memorial gave me the ability, gave me the wonderful place to thank him publicly for...

Senator: Well, if you're there, of course you're there a lot, but I think there are a lot of visitors; if everyone can visit the memorial and if we had one in every country in the world, maybe we could live in peace for a while. But, again, the American people



responded when we were in need. They could see the checks, some written by older people, their handwriting was about like mine, kind of a scribble.

Mike: What are the most meaningful parts of the memorial to you sir?

Senator: Well, obviously, each state has a column and mine from Kansas, I (unintelligible) most proud of 'cause I'm proud of all of them, but it's important. And as you know, most of them come with a flag, they have a little flag service, they have a little prayer service, they take pictures. And so when they come back here, they're organized, I mean they have a purpose and they pray for their comrades who were lost in World War II and it's all (unintelligible) sort of spontaneous. (Been talking too much, still think I'm in the Senate.)

Mike: Does the Kansas column, or any other part of the memorial, evoke a particular memory from the war for you?

Senator: Well, of course the Kansas column does because that's home and I was pretty badly wounded and spent 39 months in hospitals and I was in Kansas part of that time in the hospital. And the other part, I was in Battle Creek, Michigan, Percy Jones General Hospital and I don't know, it's just a very special place. And my wife's been great about going with me and I'd rather see her anyway. I kid them about, "I think I'll go home, leave Elizabeth here." And we have a lot of people who volunteer every Saturday, just like clockwork and one is seated right behind you. But, I don't know, I know Saturday we have a least two groups already. The state that sends the most veterans is Ohio and next would be, what do you think, (Name) Texas...

Marion: A lot from Florida.

Senator: ...oh yeah, Florida. I'd say Ohio and Florida. It's pretty hard for people from the west coast to get here 'cause they have to spend the night and that adds to the expense. And most of them have raised the money to charter a flight or they've been

sponsored by a company, so we don't have as many from the west coast. Though last week there was a group from Washington State, so. Too bad we haven't got wheels on the memorial or we'd wheel it around.

Mike: Do any memorable conversations come to mind as you, of the honor groups, honor flight groups that you've met at the memorial?

Senator: Well, Saturday, I met a 101-year-old veteran, that's the oldest World War II veteran I've met. And he was, he was sort of, I don't think he heard me but he recognized me and we kind of shook hands and Elizabeth was on the other side and gave him a hug, and he knew where he was, but he was 101. And then I recall, it's been a little over a year ago, one veteran who was 96 and he was in a wheel chair but he wanted to get a picture and his pride wouldn't let him do it in a wheelchair. And so they got him up and he could stand alright once he was up for a short period. And he stood there, looked like Ike himself, straight and we got a picture and we visited awhile. We've had, I think, as many as four brothers. We've had a lot of the Guardians come back, 'cause everybody had a Guardian to keep an eye on them, our daughters and sons. So we get a picture with the veteran and his daughter and his son, or both if they both came and that really makes them, well they're proud of their dad or their granddad anyway. I don't know how many hundreds of pictures are taken, but it's; and I think the memorial is in good shape. We've got 17 million left over. I probably shouldn't tell you that, you might tell someone else and they'll spend it.

Mike: Mum's the word.

Senator: Now, which I thought was, again, kind of a tribute to the veterans that they came in under cost and well, more or less under cost; they just kept raising more if they need it. But 17 million is a lot of money so it will be taken care of by the government, but if they run short that's something to fall back on.

Mike: What I enjoy so much about the memorial is that there are so many layers of meaning within it, so I know the Guadalcanal and the Sicily and Salerno areas were the most meaningful to my father because those are the battles that his ship *The Boise* was involved in. But then when we have younger people come through, the (Name) are a very, very good way we have to help people understand the experience of the war. So it's a very, very effective way to tell the story of World War II to a wide variety of people that come through.

Senator: Yeah, I think I've only had one person, there may be others, tell me it's too big, said it looked like something Mussolini would build and I said, "Well, it's a big memorial but it was a big war." And we didn't find it offensive, we think it's in a great spot. It's particularly beautiful at night with the foundations and the lights; they have a lot of visitors at night because of it. A lot of young people are there, which is another big plus, they're remembering the war or their grandfather, father, uncle, someone in their family or some friend; so they realize how important it is to serve your country. And I noticed a lot of times on Saturdays, one of the old veterans will get together with one of the young college students or someone about that age, and they have a great visit; so it's going to bring the generations together. We do a lot for our veterans, some aren't satisfied but most of them are and they deserve all the attention and help they receive from the federal government. I think we can always do more if needed, particularly the seriously wounded veteran who lost his sight. There're two veterans who lost all four limbs, nine or ten who lost three; this is from the present conflict. And they're young and they're in the hospital and they get a lot of attention but one of these days they're going to go home and it's going to hit them, you know, "This is my life." But again, I remember we got Hershey to send us 155 one pound Hershey bars, great big things, which we passed out to the ward, a couple of the wards in old Walter Reed. My wife is working now on helping families, the veterans come home and a lot of people help the veteran but sometimes there's a spouse or family or somebody that's sort of left out. Well she's, just this past weekend, having a lot of meetings and it'll, if it can be done, Elizabeth will do it. And it's just another way to recognize that not only the soldier made a sacrifice, so did his family, and I think we owe all of that to the family.

Mike: Our visitors are very happy and they're also pleasantly surprised that anybody of that generation can be added to the Honor Roll. It's nice to have that recognition too for the wives and the mothers, the people that stayed at home; that was a nice thing to put on that memorial.

Senator: Well, I appreciate the interview; I've told you all that I know.

Mike: Well, thank you.

Senator: I could be a debater, you know.

Mike: Well, I don't debate World War II Veterans (unintelligible, laughing).

Senator: Well, the nice thing about people our age is we can say most anything and get away with it because there's nobody around to correct us. So you have to be careful when you meet with a group of them because they might remember. I remember one Saturday where these two guys had been on the same ship, and they hadn't seen each other for forty some years. And they just happened, they were in different groups, but they happened to recognize each other, brought them together and it was a sight to behold.

Mike: I remember one day at the memorial I met a man who was in the same division of the ship my father was in, in the same ship. So, sir, thank you very much for your ...

Senator: Oh, thank you!

Mike: ... time and your wisdom and what you've done for this country, during the war and after.

Senator: We do a lot of pro-bono; veterans, they write to me because they know I have some contact with the memorial or they knew me in the Senate or something. And we try to help and try to get their congressmen to help. And (unintelligible) big thing, but they deserve to be addressed. Okay, well, have a good, how many of these you going to do?

Mike: Oh, interviews? Well we're, well the park has actually started an oral history project, so you're one of the first people that we've interviewed. We have a Korean War veteran in Gil Lyons with the Second Infantry division in Korea and he's a Ranger, he's 81 and going strong. So we've gotten off to a good start with both you and Mr. Lyons. So we'll be interviewing people that have connections with the history of our park.

Senator: Right. Well, the Park Service has been wonderful, and they've taken care of us. They're there, well, there all the time but we see them on weekends or other days we happen to go out there. And they're there to help and move the traffic along so you don't get stuck for a couple hours. If you need water, it's really not, it's below their pay grade but they'll do it anyway, they'll go out and find some. So you're doing a good job.

Mike: Thank you, sir. Thank you, I'll pass that on to my friends.

Senator: Thank you. Well, things just don't happen, you know, somebody has to make arrangements and I assume that you know in advance (unintelligible) a hundred there. Most I can remember is 800 on one Saturday, 800 is a BIG number; that's a lot of shaking hands which doesn't work too well anyway and a lot of pictures, but they're having a great time.